

Proposal Reviews

#4: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

American River Conservancy

Final Selection Panel Review

Initial Selection Panel Review

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review

Land Acquisition

Sacramento Regional Review

#1

#2

External Scientific Review #3

#4

#5

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding

Environmental Compliance

Budget

Final Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Final Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

Fund	
As Is	X
In Part	-
With Conditions	-
Consider as Directed Action	-
Not Recommended	-

Amount: **\$800,000**

Conditions, if any, of approval (if there are no conditions, please put "None"):

None

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

The Fish and Wildlife Service's comments endorse the project and pledge \$400,000 towards its implementation.

Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

Explanation of Recommendation Categories: Fund

- **As Is** (a proposal recommended for funding as proposed)
- **In Part** (a proposal for which partial funding is recommended for selected project phases or components)
- **With Conditions** (a proposal for which funds are recommended if the applicant contractually agrees to meet the specified conditions)

Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan (a proposal addressing a high priority action that requires some revision followed by additional review prior to being recommended for funding)

Not Recommended (a proposal not currently recommended for funding-after revision may be considered in the future)

Note on "Amount":

For proposals recommended as Fund As Is, Fund In Part or Fund With Conditions, the dollar amount is the amount recommended by the Selection Panel.

For proposals recommended as Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan, the dollar amount is the amount requested by the applicant(s).

Fund	
As Is	X
In Part	-
With Conditions	-
Consider as Directed Action	-
Not Recommended	-

Amount: **\$800,000**

Conditions, if any, of approval (if there are no conditions, please put "None"):

None.

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

This proposal would acquire gabbro-soil habitat within the Pine Hill Preserve and is significant to the recovery plan for five species endemic to this habitat. The Selection Panel recommends this proposal for funding, noting that this is a CVPIA priority in the PSP.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Superior: outstanding in all respects;

Above Average: Quality proposal, medium or high regional value, and no significant administrative concerns;

Adequate: No serious deficiencies, no significant regional impediments, and no significant administrative concerns;

Not Recommended: Serious deficiencies, significant regional impediments or significant administrative concerns.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Superior	This project to acquire 100+ acres of gabbro-soil habitat contributes to the recovery plan of five species endemic to this habitat. This habitat is unique to California and is being lost at a rapid rate to development. The applicants are very experienced at this type of acquisition, have integrated the project into the larger conservation context for this habitat type, have developed good linkages with stakeholders, and have devised a acquisition strategy that increases the feasibility of the project. However, this proposal lacks a solid scientific justification for acquisition of the proposed parcel because 1) there is not a significant review of the scientific literature on this habitat type and/or the endangered species within the habitat and 2) there is no information provided on the botanical composition or plant community analysis that would support the applicants current prioritization of the prospective parcels. If information were provided on these topics this proposal would be ranked as Superior.
XAbove average	
-Adequate	
-Not recommended	

1. **Goals and Justification.** Does the proposal present a clear statement of goals, objectives and hypotheses? Does the proposal present a clear justification and conceptual model for the project?

The goal of this proposal to acquire 100+ acres of Priority 1 land to add to the Pine Hill Preserve is very clear, timely and important because this acquisition might contribute directly to the recovery plan for five endangered gabbro-soil plant species and their associated habitat type. Although there was general agreement that acquisition of critically threatened gabbro habitat was extremely important, there were significant concerns expressed by some reviewers in two general areas. First, this proposal lacks a good scientific literature review of the gabbro habitat type or the endangered species within this habitat

type. This review is necessary to establish a solid justification for the acquisition. Second, the methods for ranking the priority of potential parcels for acquisition were not clear. In particular, there were questions why the #1 ranked parcel at only 134 acres was ranked higher than the #2 ranked parcel at 808 acres. How do the characteristics of the various parcels vary (e.g. larger populations of endangered species, spatial location, etc.) such that the smaller, 134 acre parcel is the most desirable. The applicants should provide some background information on the differences in botanical composition among the various parcels.

2. **Likelihood of Success (Approach, Feasibility, Capabilities and Performance Measures).** Is the project likely to succeed based on the approach, feasibility and project team capabilities? Are the proposed performance measures adequate for measuring the project's success?

There was general agreement that the applicants are very experienced and successful in land acquisitions and have a good track record in developing cost sharing and linkages among stakeholders in these types of projects. The planning for multiple contingencies (i.e. multiple parcels) was also seen as a good strategy for increasing the likelihood of success. Performance dependent on the successful acquisition of targeted parcel is straightforward although the value of the parcels also needs to be considered (see below).

3. **Outcomes and Products.** Will the project advance the state of scientific knowledge in general and/or make an important contribution to the state of knowledge of the Bay-Delta Watershed? For restoration proposals, is the project likely to contribute to ecosystem restoration or species recoveries in a significant way? Will the project produce products useful to decision-makers and scientists?

Acquisition of the threatened gabbro-soils habitat type is very important because of its contribution to the recovery plans of five species endemic to this habitat and because this type of habitat is being lost rapidly to development. The value of each of the proposed contingency acquisitions is not clear because the criteria for ranking the parcels was not well described.

4. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Although there was general agreement that the budget was reasonable, there were questions as to why the #1 ranked parcel was so much more expensive on an acreage basis than the #2 ranked parcel

5. **Regional Review.** How did the regional panel(s) rank the proposal (High, Medium, Low)? Did the regional panel(s) identify significant benefits (regional priorities, linkages with other activities, local involvement) or impediments (local constraints, conflicts with other activities, lack of local involvement) to this proposal? What were they?

The Sacramento Regional review panel ranked this proposal High and felt this project was especially feasible because by identifying multiple willing landowners it increased the likelihood that the target acquisition of 100 acres will be achieved. The panel commented that the applicants have an excellent track record in acquiring this type of habitat. The panel also felt that the project is well linked with the USFWS recovery plan, and efforts by state, federal, and local agencies to protect gabbro soils habitats.

6. **Administrative Review.** Were there significant concerns about the proposal with regard to the prior performance, environmental compliance and budget administrative reviews? What were they?

There were no significant concerns expressed in the Administrative review. Record keeping and financial management were good on a previous project. Further, the review indicated that The American River Conservancy has done an excellent job in negotiating acquisitions towards the Pine Hill Ecological Reserve. Parcels acquired may need rezoning and a general plan amendment for a land use change.

Miscellaneous comments:

None

Land Acquisition:

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

1. Is the site's ecological importance documented in the proposal?

XYes -No

If yes, please import relevant text and citations here:

Seven hundred and forty (740) distinct plant species have been recorded from the Pine Hill gabbro formation and adjoining serpentine and metamorphic rock soils. This means that approximately 10% of the native plant species known from California are represented within this 36,000 acre fraction of the State, making it a nationally-significant site of species diversity (Banky Curtis, DFG, 1996).

'As stated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Amendment to the Draft Recovery Plan for Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills 94, dated September 2000: "The objective of this recovery plan is to protect and restore sufficient habitat and numbers of populations to (1) warrant delisting of *Calystegia stebbinsii*, *Ceanothus roderickii*, *Galium californicum* ssp. *sierrae*, and *Senecio layneae* and downlisting of *Fremontodendron californicum* ssp. *decumbens* and (2) to ensure the long-term conservation of *Wyethia reticulata*, a species of concern covered in this plan. The extensive research and data that form the foundation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Draft Recovery Plan for Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills provide a high confidence that habitat acquisition and subsequent management for species survival will be successful. This proposal, therefore, constitutes a full-scale implementation involving habitat acquisition. Though highlights of the Recovery Plan are included in this proposal to aid the reviewer in gaining a general understanding of its elements, the details of the Recovery Plan are not repeated here. The reviewer is directed to the literature section at the end of this proposal for reference information. The Recovery Plan recommends a completed Reserve size of approximately 5,000 acres to sustain viable populations of the plant species identified above. Currently, there are 1,494 acres protected within the Reserve. A determination was made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that a Reserve size of 5,000 acres would be sufficient to sustain the rare plant populations into perpetuity. The analysis that was performed to arrive at this Reserve size is described in detail within the Recovery Plan, and follows these basic steps: 1. GIS data was used to identify clusters of the six plant species discussed in the Recovery Plan. 2. The extent of habitat for the gabbro plant species on the Pine Hill formation was estimated. 3. Reserve boundaries were drawn that optimized inclusion of the six species as well as met habitat connectivity and preserve size requirements necessary for fire management. 4. The preliminary Reserve design was analyzed for how well it protected the species individually. 5. The preliminary Reserve design was refined based on this analysis. 6. Further analysis of the Reserve design was conducted by (a) overlaying it with 1998 aerial photographs and (b) conducting additional site visits.

The group of public agencies and private organizations that oversee the management of the Reserve, known collectively as the Pine Hill Management Group, is currently in the process of developing a Reserve Management Plan. This plan will incorporate requirements for protection of the gabbro soil plants as well as education of the local community in the merits of preserving the plants.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998. Draft Recovery Plan for Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills. Portland, Oregon. 110+ pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2000. Amendment to the Draft Recovery Plan for Gabbro Soil Plants of the Central Sierra Nevada Foothills. Portland, Oregon. 34+ pp.

2. Is the owner's willingness to sell the site documented in the proposal?

☒Yes -No

If no, please explain:

Applicant indicates first 2 of 4 potential sellers are willing. Remaining 2 owners will be subject of serious negotiations only if purchases from first 2 fall through. Applicant says owners of these lower priority lands are willing sellers if price is right, but so far there has been no agreement on price.

3. Is evidence of local government support for the purchase included in the proposal?

☒Yes -No

If yes, please explain:

Applicant asserts that purchase of these properties is supported by El Dorado county planning departments + counsel, El Dorado County Water agency, and El Dorado Irrigation District. These purchases were approved in 1/4-ly meetings of interagency Pine Hill Management group, which includes these local agencies, DFG, USFWS, and BLM.

4. Is the use proposed for the site after its purchase clearly consistent with the site's general plan designation and zoning?

-Yes ☒No

If no, please explain:

Site is zoned RE-10 (presumably residential estates, with a 10 acre minimum parcel size), and is designated for high density residential, multi-family residential, or commercial use in the county land use plan. It is unclear how a nature preserve will conform with these zones and land use designations, or whether it will be compatible with use + development of surrounding lands for their zoned/designated land uses.

5. Is the land mapped as prime farmland, farmland of statewide significance, unique farmland, or farmland of local importance?

-Yes XNo

If yes, please explain the classification:

x

Is the site under a Williamson Act contract?

-Yes XNo

Will use of the site change from agriculture after its purchase?

-Yes -No XNot Currently in Agriculture

6. Is this a time-sensitive acquisition opportunity, according to the proposal?

XYes -No

If yes, please import relevant text here:

Due to the rapid rate of urban encroachment in western El Dorado County, protection of the rare plant community must keep pace with development plans. Just in the past six months, a number of parcels within the Recovery Plans priority 1 acquisition area have been sold to private parties interested in building residences on those parcels. This fragmentation of the remaining habitat due to the building of homes, roads, and other associated infrastructure makes controlled burns either much more difficult or impossible, and also increases edge effects due to non-native vegetation, urban runoff. Very small fragments of habitat may not maintain proper ecosystem functioning and often lose native species so the diversity of native vegetation is reduced.

Other Comments:

The applicant states: "The public has been largely unaware of the plans which the Pine Hill Management Group is developing for the Reserve, and so is also unaware of the significance of the rare plant community in their neighborhood. With the support of a recent two year grant from the California Department of Fish and Game, an outreach and education program about the Pine Hill Reserve is currently in progress. The purpose of this program is to inform the public about the importance of preserving the rare plant habitat, and clarifies how Reserve management will proceed." It isn't clear whether this lack of public awareness, especially as development proceeds on nearby unprotected lands, may interfere with management of protected public lands, including use of prescribed burns, control of predators, etc.

Sacramento Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

Overall Ranking: -Low -Medium **XHigh**

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

This type of project was specifically identified in the PSP, and most panel members felt it was a high priority.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

This project seems to be feasible because the applicants identified multiple willing landowners, increasing the likelihood that the target acquisition of 100 acres will be achieved. The applicants have an excellent history of acquiring and protecting gabbro soils habitat, and have demonstrated their ability to successfully complete these types of actions.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

XYes -No

How?

The project specifically addresses PSP regional priority 1, to protect and manage gabbro-soil chaparral habitat.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

XYes -No

How?

The project is well linked with the USFWS recovery plan, and efforts by state, federal, and local agencies to protect gabbro soils habitats.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

XYes -No

How?

The applicants have successfully established a preserve system in the area and have demonstrated their ability to protect and acquire gabbro soils habitat working with local landowners.

Other Comments:

This project is a critical need for gabbro soils species. The high level of cost sharing already developed for this project and the track record of the applicants to protect and acquire gabbro soils habitat, while planning for multiple contingencies, highly recommends this proposal.

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Pine Hill Ecological Reserve**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	The preservation of this incredibly diverse plant community is extremely important and timely. It is difficult to tell whether the proposed acquisition target is a key parcel for the reserve because no spatial component is included. The price seems high.
X Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The objectives are clearly stated: to preserve unique habitat that supports a substantial number of threatened and endangered plant species. The serpentine/gabbro habitat identified is clearly of national or global significance in its biodiversity. The current zoning of the proposed parcels as high density residential, multi-family and commercial makes the project extremely timely.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The project is for acquisition only.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The project is for acquisition only. However, failure to delineate on a map or verbally the spatial relationship of the proposed acquisitions to the remainder of the existing reserve and to other potential acquisition targets makes it impossible to evaluate whether the project is well-designed.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The project appears to be feasible. Details of price negotiation are generally part of any acquisition of this sort. Without money in hand, it is very difficult to strike a deal.

In instances where the goal is to manage for a number of sensitive, endemic species, I believe that acquisition of fee title, rather than simply an easement, is imperative. The applicants make this point. It is particularly important in systems that may be maintained by prescribed burning, which is inherently incompatible with residential development.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

USFWS has formulated an acreage goal that would provide the target species sufficient habitat for viable populations. If the area can be achieved, presumably project objectives will be met.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

Although the project is for acquisition only, the partners involved in the management of the reserve will collect information on appropriate management strategies in this habitat.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

For the past 12 years, the American River Conservancy has been successfully purchasing and preserving land. They are well qualified to undertake this project.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Although the amount requested from the CalFed program is modest, the cost of the primary acquisition target seems steep to me. I have no way of knowing anything about the appraisal of the proposed 134-acre property, but comparing it with the other properties proposed as backups, it seems quite expensive. It would be extremely useful to see exactly how the property fits into the reserve design spatially to help assess whether the price is justified. While I respect the

Conservancy's judgement, the proposal does not go far enough, in my opinion, in justifying the purchase of this particular parcel.

I'm curious, given the number of federally listed species on the property, how the current owners would be able to develop it without substantial mitigation efforts, and why that would not affect the appraised value.

Miscellaneous comments:

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Pine Hill Ecological Reserve**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

None.

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	Insufficient information about current management of the reserve, monitoring (e.g. species diversity on target sites).
X Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

Yes. Yes.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

Yes. Yes. Implementation: justified.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

Yes. Knowledge addition unclear, same with novel information, methodology. Unclear about useful information for decision-makers.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

Yes. Prob. about 90%. Yes.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

No information about monitoring, little information about current management of the reserve. No monitoring is proposed. Monitoring plans are not explicit.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

Yes. Yes. Unclear as to interpretive outcomes.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

Good record. Project team looks good. Yes.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Apparently so.

Miscellaneous comments:

None.

External Scientific: #3

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Pine Hill Ecological Reserve**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

☒Correct

☐Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

None

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	Because of the concerns raised in the Goals section I have rated this proposal as poor. If the concerns raised in the Goals section are fully addressed I would rate this proposal as excellent.
-Good	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

No

On the surface, the American River Conservancys goal of protecting the habitat of Federally listed endangered and threatened plant species through land acquisition appears clear. However, because the Conservancys proposal is to implement conservation plans created by other entities and because the Conservancy has not provided any data indicating the presence of the listed species on the land to be acquired, the relevance of the particular parcels in their proposal for conserving the listed species is not clear.

The US Fish and Wildlife draft recovery plan cited in the applicants proposal recommends that five reserves be created on the Pine Hill formation in western El Dorado County. The recovery plan is well conceived and the reserves it proposes include both current habitat as well as areas of potential habitat, buffer zones, and corridors. The reserves would be Pine Hill, Penny Lane, Salmon Falls/Martel Creek, Cameron Park, and an unnamed specialty reserve. The Salmon Falls/Martel Creek and Cameron Park reserves are further divided into northern and southern units. The land to be included in the proposed reserves is a mixture of government and private land. The Salmon Falls/Martel Creek and Cameron Park reserves are apparently unique because relatively large parcels of private land are available for purchase. This contrasts with the situation in the Pine Hill reserve area where the land has already been subdivided into small parcels. Pine Hill, the Cameron Park north unit, and the Salmon Falls/Martel Creek north unit have been designated as Priority 1 goals. The draft recovery plan specifies only the areas to be included within the proposed reserves and does not assign priorities to particular parcels of land within each reserve.

American River Conservancys proposal states that a reserve management group (Pine Hill Management Group) consisting of the American River Conservancy, the California Native Plant Society, Eldorado County, Eldorado Irrigation District, and State and Federal government entities has prioritized the four parcels described in the application. However, the Conservancy has not disclosed the criteria used to rank the parcels for acquisition or whether there are other equally ranked or higher ranked parcels that are not being considered for acquisition by the Conservancy. The Conservancy also states that each of the parcels is located in a Priority 1 reserve area.

If it is assumed that the four parcels described in the proposal are the four highest ranked parcels out of all available parcels, then it is not clear why the 134 acre parcel in the Cameron Park north unit with an appraised value of \$3,362,000 is ranked #1 while the 808 acre parcel in the Salmon Falls/Martel Creek north unit with an estimated value of between \$2,000,000 and \$4,000,000 is ranked #2. The Conservancy stated that the owners of both parcels are willing to sell. Does the Cameron Park north parcel contain more species, more individuals, or both while the Salmon Falls/Martel Creek north contain more buffer or more potential habitat? Without data it is impossible to tell if the prioritization scheme of the Pine Hill Management Group is based solely on scientific merit or whether other factors entered into the decision process.

It is one thing to develop a well considered recovery plan and quite another to implement it. While the recover plan sets laudable goals, its implementation on private property may never be completed. Without more data it is impossible to determine why a parcel is ranked # 1 by the Pine Hills Management Group. For example, one scenario might be that the parcel ranked #1 could be buffer land in an area with high property values and is required to buffer adjacent developments from management actions such as proscribed burning while the parcel ranked #2 might actually contain many individuals of the listed species but be ranked lower because development doesnt threaten its management. Because this recovery plan is in the implementation stages and there is no guarantee that it will ever be fully implemented on private land, it would seem that the first acquisition priority would be to conserve areas where the listed species are present. If the parcel ranked #1 and the parcel ranked #2 are equal biologically, then it would seem prudent to acquire 808 acres of preserve instead of 134 acres of preserve at the same cost.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

Not applicable

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

See goals section

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

It appears that the American River Conservancy has specialized in land acquisition with subsequent transfer to governmental entities since 1989 when its executive director left the real estate business and formed the American River Conservancy. According to the information provided in the proposal, the Conservancy has been very successful in this endeavor.

The Conservancys proposal states that it follows a process of collaboration that involves (1) identification of the recommended acquisition areas by the Service, (2) research into land ownership and existence of willing sellers by the Conservancy, (3) agreement on acquisition priorities by the Pine Hill Management Group, (4) execution of the acquisition by the Conservancy, and (5) transfer of title to the destination agency. The Conservancy does not state the order in which the various elements of the process are accomplished and it does not state whether it receives compensation for its services.

The Conservancy states that it is currently under contract to purchase gabbro soils rare plant habitat from three landowners which would result in additional acreage that would be added to the reserve. Given its long track record, the Conservancy appears to be uniquely qualified to complete these types of transactions on schedule.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

Not applicable

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

See feasibility section.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

See feasibility section.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Sea goals section

Miscellaneous comments:

External Scientific: #4

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: **American River Conservancy**

Proposal Title: **Pine Hill Ecological Reserve**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
X Excellent	This project should be funded with high priority.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

The goals are extremely clear, simple, timely and important; namely to acquire 100+ acres of land to add to the Pine Hill Preserve, which is essential to fulfilling the recovery plan for five endangered gabbro-soil plant species and the vegetation type they belong to. The project is extremely well justified from the broad perspective of conservation of native Californian species and communities.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

Yes - the proposal makes clear how the target size of 5,000 acres for the Pine Hill preserve was reached, the species that will benefit from the proposed acquisition, the management that will be required, and the reason why fee title acquisition is considered the appropriate strategy.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

This question is not directly relevant since the project will generate land preservation, rather than information.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

Yes, the approach appears feasible and likely to succeed, as all the necessary biological inventory and real-estate groundwork appear to have been done, and the applicants have a record of successful completion of similar projects. The scale of the proposed acquisition (100 acres) is small relative to the total objective for the preserve (3,200 more acres), but that does not detract from its importance.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The performance measure is simply the acreage acquired.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

The product or outcome is the additional acreage.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

It appears the applicants have excellent records of past achievement in land acquisition and management; they have done considerable prior work to establish willing sellers; and they have formed strong partnerships with all the relevant federal, state and local agencies to expand the Pine Hill preserve.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

Yes - considering the extreme rarity of the Pine Hill plant community and its associated species, the extreme development pressures that threaten them, and the availability of considerable additional funding for this project from other sources.

Miscellaneous comments:

The above review guidelines seem to indicate that standard proposals are for research rather than land acquisition; thus, I don't know the CALFED criteria well enough to judge how well this project is justified with respect to the goals of the CALFED grant program. But with respect to the goal of acquiring lands for threatened species and communities, this proposal is of utmost importance and urgency.

External Scientific: #5

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

None

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Excellent: outstanding in all respects;

Good: quality but some deficiencies;

Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
XExcellent	Straightforward and timely proposal for acquisition of land that supports a critically endangered habitat. Well thought out strategy for acquisition that greatly increases chances for success.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

1 - Excellent

The primary goal of acquisition of priority 1 habitat in these gabbro soil plant communities is very timely and important because these communities are unique to California and are being very rapidly lost to development.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

2 - Very Good

This acquisition is another step in trying to sustain this unique habitat and is well justified within the context of the larger ongoing conservation effort for these communities.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

1 - Excellent

The strategy of having alternate priority 1 parcels in order to offer some flexibility given the vagaries of the real estate process is a very good idea.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The applicants have done their homework with regard to laying the groundwork for this acquisition and have developed a good track record in cooperative action with other organizations.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

2- Very Good

The closing of escrow on a desired parcel is a very simple but clear performance measure. Although monitoring plans are not described, it's not clear to me that this should be expected for this type of proposal.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

2- Very Good

Same as above

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

2- Very Good

It seems that the applicants have a good grasp of the intricacies of the real estate "jungle", have a solid knowledge of the procedures involved with the acquisition process, and have experience in organizing cooperative ventures in acquisition.

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

1 - Excellent

The parcels listed for potential acquisitions are extremely valuable biologically and the use of a contingency plan for acquisition would seem to be a very good strategy.

Miscellaneous comments:

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding:

New Proposal Number: 4

New Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

1. Prior CALFED project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*
2. Prior CVPIA project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

#14-48-11420-97J-231 Pine Hill Ecological Reserve acquisition - Cameron Park Unit 1997, 1998

3. Have negotiations about contracts or contract amendments with this applicant proceeded smoothly, without persistent difficulties related to standard contract terms and conditions?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any difficulties:

4. Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

5. Is the applicant's progress towards these project(s)' milestones and outcomes to date satisfactory?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

6. Is the applicant's reporting, records keeping, and financial management of these projects satisfactory?

-Yes ☒No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

Record keeping and financial management have been good. Application is not complete in that all previous partnering funding has not been accurately identified. Line 20 other funding sources include El Dorado Irrigation District, El Dorado County, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Central Valley Project Conservation Fund. These entities have provided funding towards the acquisition of other parcels of the Pine Hill Ecological Reserve.

7. Will the project(s) be ready for next phase funding in 2002, based on its current progress and expenditure rates?

☒Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain:

Other Comments:

The American River Conservancy has done an excellent job in negotiating acquisitions towards the Pine Hill Ecological Reserve. Clarification of environmental compliance checklist anticipate only a environmental assessment not FONSI

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

1. Are the legal or regulatory issues that affect the proposal identified adequately in the proposal?

☒Yes ☐No

If no, please explain:

May need rezone and general plan amendment for a land use change.

2. Does the project's timeline and budget reflect adequate planning to address legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal?

☒Yes ☐No

If no, please explain:

Timeline for NEPA compliance not specifically stated but will be complete prior to land acquisition.

Budget not specified.

3. Do the legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal significantly impair the project's feasibility?

☐Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments:

Budget:

Proposal Number: 4

Applicant Organization: American River Conservancy

Proposal Title: Pine Hill Ecological Reserve

1. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each year of requested support?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

2. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each task identified?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Does the proposal clearly state the type of expenses encompassed in indirect rates or overhead costs?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

5. Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary?

XYes -No

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimbursed by cost share funds included in the budget summary).

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

-Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments: